



Testimony of

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Higher Education and Workforce Advancement Committee

of the  
Connecticut General Assembly

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My name is Patricia Gonzalez; I'm the Executive Director of Central Area Health Education Center, Inc. (Central AHEC, Inc.) that covers the areas of central Connecticut (greater Hartford area, Middlesex and Tolland Counties.

I am here to testify before you today on behalf of Central AHEC, Inc. and the AHEC Network collaborative to make sure that state funding remains for us to continue to provide essential programs that have been successful within our communities.

These programs have allowed high school students to learn about health careers ~~and also~~ and have provided opportunities to explore all of the possibilities within the health field, public health, college and work force development.

It is imperative that the funding for the CT AHEC Network be retained for \$406,723 Connecticut AHEC line item ~~restored to \$456,000~~. The CT AHEC network provides Connecticut residents with critical resources and programs that are both timely and essential in developing a healthcare workforce which is cost effective, culturally competent, inter-professional and responsive to the healthcare needs of the state.

For the past 17 years the Connecticut Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Network and its four regional centers has successfully linked local community groups with the resources of the University of Connecticut, its Health Center and other academic institutions and health professions training programs across the state. With the focus of supporting and developing Connecticut's healthcare workforce, the CT AHEC network provides state-wide coverage and programming to thousands of residents through its collaboration with more than 200 community based partner organizations.

The CT AHEC network is based at the University of Connecticut Health Center and is implemented through four regional centers located in the Willimantic, Hartford, Waterbury, and Bridgeport. The four centers enable The Connecticut AHEC Network to carry out local programs with great efficiency. As a statewide program, it functions locally to provide high quality, efficient, effective and flexible services that meet local needs.

The Connecticut AHEC Network's mission and goals directly support healthcare workforce development in the state. Focus areas include:

- **Recruiting underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students into the health professions.**  
The AHEC Network engages more than 7,000 learners annually from 30+ secondary schools, 9 colleges/universities and 10 health professional schools state-wide. Examples of our program include the National Youth Health Service Corps (YHSC), The National Collegiate Health Service Corps (CHSC) and Urban Service Track to name a few amongst our centers. Through its' on-line health careers manual (HOT Guide – Health Occupations and Technology Careers ([www.healthcareersinct.com](http://www.healthcareersinct.com)), The CT AHEC Network provides current and accurate information on Connecticut based on health professions programs, admissions pre-requisites, training, credentialing and roles of over 85 health careers and health professions to students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, librarians more than 1 million times each year.

- **Partnering with community organizations to address local health issues.** As an example, Central CT AHEC has partnered with the City of Hartford and its medical centers in a number of health initiatives; including a ~~CNA pre-training EMT course~~, focused on engaging ~~minorities and residents from the community male and female African-American and Latino Hartford Residents~~ as ~~Certified Nurse's Assistant EMT workers and front-line providers~~.
- **Providing continuing education that improves the care received by vulnerable populations.** The CT AHEC network provides continuing education for the state's healthcare professionals through a variety of mediums and topics including: chronic disease management, immunization and public health, cultural competence, utilization of medical interpreters and Community Health Workers, etc.
- **Providing outreach to vulnerable populations (migrant farm workers, medically and dentally underserved, homeless, etc.)** The CT AHEC Network has worked with **Access Health Connecticut** as Navigator Organizations and Hosting Assistants to educate and enroll citizens in affordable health care plans available on CT's state based exchange.
- **Developing and supporting community based inter-professional training opportunities for health professionals and pre-health professions students.**

### Request

Within its limited funding, The Connecticut AHEC Network reaches a significant number of people across the state.

To be able to continue our important work, I, Patricia Gonzalez, am respectfully requesting that AHEC funding ~~for the amount of -\$406,723 in the amount of \$456,000~~ dollars ~~to be retained restored~~ to the AHEC line in the High Education and Workforce Advancement Budget.

Fiscal support for the CT AHEC Network is as diverse as its programs with state, federal, foundation and private support. Withdrawal of state support will jeopardize these other resources. In an era of healthcare transformation, maintaining the ~~\$456,000~~406,723 AHEC line item in the 20168-201917 state budgets is critical to assure that the CT AHEC Network will be there to deliver its unique services and programs to our residents as we create the diverse, well trained and cost effective inter-professional healthcare workforce that Connecticut requires and deserves.